

A SOCIALIST COMMENTARY ON COLONIAL AFFAIRS

# Venture

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## **SPECIAL NUMBER**

### **COLONIAL WORKERS AND STUDENTS IN BRITAIN**

**W**E have devoted a good deal of space in this issue to some problems which arise from the presence in the United Kingdom, in increasing numbers, of workers and students from the West Indies, Africa and other parts of the Commonwealth. Our contributors include a Jamaican and a Nigerian. The latest official figures put the colonial students now in the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic at nearly 10,000, of whom more than half are in London. This includes nurses and other vocational students as well as those at universities. Nearly 4,000 come from West Africa, more than 1,000 from East and Central Africa and about 2,300 from the British West Indies.

There is no reliable estimate of the number of colonial workers, but it is probably about 80,000—a very small proportion of our total labour force.

The two problems are separate, except in as far as some students have to be earners as well. Generally speaking, the student is not in economic competition with British workers. His problems are academic and social. With the growth of university colleges in Africa, the West Indies and the Far East, there seems to be no reason why undergraduate students should come here, except in certain faculties which are not catered for at home. It is generally better that they should support their own colleges and reach maturity among their contemporaries in their own environments and then come to Britain for postgraduate work or special courses. In particular, student life in London can be very unsatisfactory for the younger man and woman. At the provincial universities and in Wales and Scotland, it is easier to find good working and social conditions. The lot of the private student without a grant, who tends to settle in London, often with inadequate means and qualifications, can be particularly difficult.

The worker, on the other hand, is in direct economic contact with organised British labour. If he is coloured, he is apt to ascribe all his difficulties to this fact. In a sense, he is right, in that his colour makes him easily identifiable as an 'intruder.' But pretty well everything which is held against him is or has been held against other 'outsiders,' Italians, Poles and the like, not to mention the slow-dying prejudice in industry and the professions against native British women! The basic reason in each case is economic, not racial. The established worker everywhere fears that the new-comer will threaten his standards, existing or potential, including such things as overtime pay. He reckons that a plentiful labour supply weakens his position in relation to his employer and he may not be convinced that the colonial worker will fully observe trade union principles.

There may be social prejudice as well, but again it is generally acute only when there is direct competition, as for housing in over-crowded areas. Colonial workers are usually accepted cheerfully by the public, as bus conductors, espresso coffee bar waiters and so on.

There are several general remedies for the problems involved: more emphasis in Labour and trade union circles on the true meaning of human brotherhood; an objective appraisal in each industry of the effect on productivity and, therefore, on prosperity of continuing labour shortages; more adequate explanations to potential immigrants of labour conditions here and more energetic efforts to develop their economic resources at home; more attention in United Kingdom schools to colonial topics and to the fact that children in colonial territories are British too, whatever their colour, and are brought up to believe that they have a right to a welcome here, a fact which is not always appreciated in this country.



## MALAYAN ELECTIONS

EVENTS are moving so fast in Malaya and Singapore that almost anything one writes is out of date when it is printed. The striking victory of Tengku Abdul Rahman and the Alliance party, in winning 51 of the 52 elected seats in the first national election in Malaya, sets the stage for a further push towards independence. As the Tengku frankly said: 'I do not think the electorate was interested in policies. They were more interested in independence than anything else.' Since the election, he has made it clear that he will not be held back by arguments over Singapore, which as a strategic base 'may have to wait,' a sentiment which the Singapore Chief Minister does not share. Having promised to work meanwhile within the existing constitution, the Alliance is bent on speeding up the process of securing a new one, with a fully elected legislature instead of almost half nominated as now, and possibly bi-cameral, though this plank in the platform does not seem to have been fully explained. The aim is abolition of the High Commissioner's veto and complete internal control in two years.

The valuable lesson of the Alliance victory was that there was a very fair response to its non-communal appeal. Owing to citizenship restrictions, 84 per cent. of the electorate is Malay, though by population roughly only 50 per cent. is Malay, 40 per cent. Chinese and 10 per cent. Indian or Singalese. Citizenship is one of the first nettles which the new government must grasp. Of 52 Alliance candidates, the 17 non-Malays were all duly elected. This was a better showing than Dato Onn's Negara Party, which had 29 Malay and 1 Chinese candidate. The Labour Party had only four candidates, two Chinese and two Indians. With the nominated and official members, the new Federal Legislative Council will have 50 Malays, 25 Chinese, seven Indians, two Singalese, twelve Europeans and a member from Malacca. It is reckoned that the Alliance will command 71 votes out of 98. In the Cabinet there are six Malays, three Chinese and one Indian with three European officials and the High Commissioner presiding.

By far the best social programme, as one might expect, was put up by the Labour Party, with emphasis on education, health and social security. But the electorate is clearly not yet interested.

As we have seen in the Gold Coast, it is only when independence is almost within reach that differences over party policy and ideology become acute and sectional interests manifest themselves. The Alliance represents some powerful commercial

concerns. It also has to deal with the traditional quasi-feudal rulers. No one yet quite sees how nine partly-independent states and two settlements are going to make one nation. Tengku Abdul Rahman's skill will be sharply tested if he is to keep together all the disparate elements of his party.

Meanwhile, the Emergency is still on. The Alliance promised an amnesty, to be followed by universal conscription if not accepted. Evidently caution prevails, as the offer is now to be timed in accordance with military advice.

Constitutional teething troubles may with luck be overcome while world rubber prices stay high. The sooner self-government is attained, the sooner can more attention be paid to the considerable social and economic problems which face the Federation.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

TO those who find it hard to see the wood for the trees, a recent address by Arthur Gaitskell<sup>1</sup> should prove helpful. With his considerable experience, he tries to put our colonial policy, particularly in Africa, in perspective. He poses two main problems: first, how to reconcile the ideal of self-determination for African territories with the desirable objectives of a higher standard of living, the export of our beliefs in freedom and justice, and defence requirements; and secondly, how to reconcile self-determination with the existence of non-African settlers. He is extremely critical of what he believes to be the muddled thinking in East Africa, where he sees no justification for not openly proclaiming self-determination as the avowed aim for Kenya, as well as for Uganda and Tanganyika. To start, as is being done in all three territories, on a multi-racial basis, seems to him to confuse the issue and to alienate the African majority. Granted the great need for external aid and local multi-racial co-operation, he asks whether this co-operation is more likely to be forthcoming under a multi-racial constitution or under self-determination, and comes down heavily in favour of the latter.

In an analysis of international investment, he asks on what terms is foreign investment first, welcome, and secondly, willing to come to under-developed territories, and points to investors' preferences for 'safe' countries, which only increases the gap between developed and under-developed lands. To ensure that 'our economic investment builds up their liberty,' some new method of in-

*(Continued on page 3)*

<sup>1</sup> *What Have They to Defend?* Africa Bureau, 69, Gt. Peter Street, S.W.1. Price 1s. 6d.



# West Indian Immigration to Britain

by a Jamaican Socialist

**T**HE land problem in Jamaica lies at the root of her population difficulties and of the emigration of many Jamaicans to Britain. The under-utilisation and misuse of land results from the lack of determined and constructive planning in the long period of colonialism. The conditions it produced drove Jamaicans abroad to seek their livelihood—to the United States, Cuba and Africa, wherever work could be found; and now it drives them to Britain.

Not until economic planning has increased the wealth of Jamaica and shared it round to raise standards of living (which are much below anything known in Britain) will the impetus towards emigration be removed. For then, perhaps, there will be real opportunities for the technical and professional training which is the passport to a better way of life. At the moment the emigrant to Britain at least knows that, if he finds a job, his child will receive an education from an early age with some chance of advancement. The prospect abroad is certainly no worse than that at home and many are willing to accept the challenge of a new way of life.

## Reasons for Emigrating

Among the hundreds going over to Britain some resign from a job in Jamaica that pays very poorly or that offers little, if any, prospect of promotion (of these, some would go to America, but for the many quota difficulties). Maids who have improved their cooking skill go where maids are valued and paid, and so escape the life of drudgery without adequate pay. Young girls out of school with nothing before them except the loose living which their elder sisters have often unwillingly fallen into, are helped to migrate to England by their relatives in order to obtain a respectable living—as ward maids, factory hands, servers in cafes, nurses-in-training or in almost any job. To escape from idleness and frustration their friends and families aid them in this quest for an early ‘break.’

Jamaicans—Black Jamaicans and the poor—are not unaware of colour discrimination in Britain. They have been victims in their own land and they are prepared to stand up to the race discrimination they are told about. They shrug their shoulders when faced with the talk of segregation and reply: ‘Here we are segregated too, and as there is little employment we can’t fight back. There we can go

our own way independently of those who think us inferior, and show them how we can work and live as upright and respectably as the Whites.’

## Need for Capital

How long will this trek to Britain continue? The answer will largely depend on how soon the present Government is able to create fuller employment, make wages keep pace with the cost of living and so raise the standard of living. Jamaica has made every effort consistent with its present economy to pull itself up by its own boot-straps. Indeed, there is evidence of good planning already and the germ of self-help is alive. Jamaica has a latent labour force that is the envy of other parts of the Caribbean. It has labour and political leadership that can stand fair comparison with most progressive countries. But it needs capital and long-term credit and enough to plan for years ahead, so as to overtake the back log, to provide work for thousands leaving school every year and to undertake the programme of industrial expansion which must be implemented.

It is unfortunate in these circumstances that the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund has not come forward with more generous help to enable Jamaica to stabilise its economy and to extend decent social conditions to the ordinary people. It is only in this way that we can reduce emigration and employ Jamaicans to increase Jamaica’s own wealth.

Speaking for myself, I hope that Britain will employ the services of Jamaicans and absorb those who choose to make Britain their home with the same willingness that we in Jamaica have shown in the absorption of so many races and cultures. Let there be evidence of the spirit of brotherliness of which we so often hear. And let Britain fully accept her duty to Jamaica.

*E. Dalton James.*

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## COMMENT (continued)

vestment is needed. It is surprising that at this point he fails to mention S.U.N.F.E.D. (Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development) which, properly organised and supported, would supply the answer. But his theme that we must search out common ideals which we can all defend is profoundly true and his illustrations and arguments are well worth pondering.



# Racial Challenge and Response

by L. A. Fabunmi

(A Nigerian Student in Britain who has also studied in U.S.A.)

THE general trend towards a change of heart on the part of our fellow men and women on the other side of the colour line, apparent in the concern shown by unofficial institutions like Political and Economic Planning in Britain and the positive governmental steps such as the recent Supreme Court decision in the United States, leads one to assert with optimism that the darkest hour is passing, and that the dawn of a better to-morrow is near.

It has taken us, the 'coloured' peoples of the world, too long a time to challenge effectively the general dominance of Europe and North America over us. It is all very well to say that the introduction of race consciousness as a force influencing European thought and behaviour came about partly as a result of the industrial and technical revolution, coupled with the nationalism and imperial ambitions of European States among which Britain was predominant. The European-type of class distinction was carried into Africa, America and Asia in the form of race differentiation. But the 'white man' should not bear the whole blame. He has created most of the racial myths that now plague the world. But we, the 'coloured' peoples of the world over, have helped him to perpetuate them by our failure, in the past, to challenge rather than seemingly accept, the premises of his theories about race supremacy.

## Progress of Coloured Peoples

However, the tide is changing: now that Africa with Asia has stated categorically, 'I am,' Western Europe and North America are beginning, though reluctantly, to say, 'Yes, you are!' With the united voice of Asia and Africa at the Bandung Conference, for instance, saying quite clearly that they will no longer be pawns at the hands of either the capitalist West or the Communist East, London, Moscow, Paris and Washington have, at least temporarily, ceased to throw their own weight around the globe with the hydrogen bomb in their hands, as though they were the only ones that count in the world. In the United States, George Washington Carver—a Negro, black as ebony, born a slave, sold in exchange for a mule, died as one of the world's greatest industrial scientists; Ralph Bunche, another Negro of lighter shade, has become one of the greatest diplomats of our time. The obvious achievements of many outstanding Negroes, together with the doggedness of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, are practical evidence against the inferiority of the American Negro. To this Negro challenge in the United States the whites are responding by accelerating the process of total equality both in theory and in practice. With the increasing evidence of African ability

to rule himself, Britain is now trying, though at a rate much slower than in the United States, to modify its racial theories. The African, once a laboratory specimen for British anthropologists, has become increasingly familiar in Britain; he is to be met with at all the universities, most of the teaching hospitals, in technical colleges and in many towns throughout Britain. During this 1954-55 academic year, there are 3,500 students abroad, mainly in Britain and North America, from Nigeria alone. It is, therefore, no longer easy to keep alive the usual propaganda about the 'primitive' head-hunter from the jungles of Africa. In the past it was easy for Mr. (now Sir) Winston Churchill, to drive a wedge between the Negroes and the Arabs of the Sudan by writing in his book about the Sudan, *The River War*, that 'The qualities of mongrels are rarely admirable, and the mixture of the Arab and Negro types had produced a debased cruel breed.' With Sayed Ismail El Azhari, partly Negro and partly Arab, now ably managing the affairs of the Sudan as the Prime Minister, it would be difficult for Sir Winston Churchill (who is himself of American and British ancestry) to support his generalisation.

## Student Ambassadors

In their report, *Colonial Students in Britain*,<sup>1</sup> P.E.P. observe, 'Young men, who two or three years previously were students in London, have found themselves occupying ministerial posts in West African Governments; and many others begin to play an influential part in public and professional life very shortly after returning home.' It is, therefore, becoming increasingly difficult, it seems, for the 'Mother of Parliaments' through the Colonial Office, to continue to propagate the myth that Africans are, politically, babes in the wood. The coloured peoples of the world are forcing racialists to be more cautious because the racial ideas which they have propagated for centuries are now becoming more and more dangerous to all mankind—less so to the usual victims and imminently more to the protagonists themselves. PEP began its enquiry on Colonial (Coloured) Students in Britain because of 'a general feeling of anxiety about the problems met by colonial students living and studying in Britain and a fear that the difficulties which the students encountered might influence adversely the good relations between Britain and the Colonial peoples.' (p. 4.)

While we note the paternalistic tone of PEP, they deserve our full appreciation for paying a compli-

<sup>1</sup> Published by Political and Economic Planning, 1955, price 21s.



ment to our achievements in Britain. Their book is an acknowledgment of the fact that our presence among them as student ambassadors of our respective countries and peoples is slowly but surely bringing about a bloodless revolution in racial concepts and in the relations between the 'coloured' and the 'white' national groups of the world.

### Colour Prejudice in Britain

But PEP's analysis reveals, on the whole, problems not peculiar to the colonials alone, as they seem to suggest. They face any student, European, American, Irish or Welsh, who leaves his or her home to study, say in London, or an Englishman who goes to Chicago. The major difference lies in the additional insults and injury the 'coloured' students suffer at the hands of 'Whites' merely on account of their rich pigmentation; but this PEP chooses to ignore. They and the British Press shy away from admitting quite frankly that Britain suffers from the chronic disease of colour prejudice, discrimination and even colour bar. 'West Africa,' that ambivalent London journal with the hands of Esau but the voice of Jacob, commented (editorial of July 9, 1955) that Nehru found Oxford congenial and that the older generation of West Africans such as Herbert Macaulay of Nigeria, and Bankole Bright of Sierra Leone, found their student days in England agreeable enough. In essence PEP and the British Press suggest that most of the cases of colour bar or discrimination cited existed mainly in the imagination of over-sensitive visiting students of non-European colour.

### Assumptions Criticized

The Report makes useful recommendations under twenty-six broad heads. They seem to be based on general assumptions: (1) that 'Colonial' students make contacts with difficulty because they lack knowledge of English ways of domestic life and living; (2) that non-European students are allowed to leave their homes inadequately qualified and insufficiently briefed to study in Britain; (3) that no effort is made by their own respective countries for their welfare here, and (4) that no assurance of ultimate employment is given.

These assumptions are justifiable, but they are also open to certain criticisms. (1) That English culture or way of life, not being basically too different from that of other human beings, should not be very formidable to students from British territories, with a British educational system, who (on top of their own mother tongue) quite often speak and write the Queen's English reasonably well. A British correspondent writing in *The Observer* on June 26, remarked that educated people in 'West Africa' 'speak an English of which the B.B.C. would not be ashamed.' Apart from this, by the process of diffusion over the centuries, culture is basically a universal heritage. (2) Prospective students should be provided with adequate information before leaving their own countries, but we must be careful not to 'brief' them too much about the prevailing conditions in

Britain, especially about the racial or colour attitudes. Personally, one of my initial assets in the United States was the innocence of a 'blank mind' about race or colour. (3) The responsibility for the welfare of Nigerian and Gold Coast students in Britain and North America has been transferred from the Colonial Office to the West African Governments concerned, and the recommendations of PEP should be useful to them. But the major responsibility rests with the British public's attitude; for it is impossible for overseas Governments to control public attitudes to their students in other lands. (4) In connection with ultimate employment, neither American nor European students are always guaranteed ready-made jobs, and the case of overseas students need not be too different. We all live in a world in which nothing is so certain as uncertainty; even so, many overseas students come from up-and-coming countries where better job opportunities exist, because of the general economic expansions, than in Britain. In any case, the purpose of education goes far beyond earning a living. It includes the art of living together harmoniously with all races in a changing and shrinking world.

### New Orientation Needed

PEP has, on the whole, done an excellent job, providing a lot of reading material and useful information on the problems of colonial students for those who care to read. But they, or another interested organisation, should now take the next step—turn their attention to the 'White' public from top to bottom, who need a new orientation in regard to their perceptions about colour or race; the British public have, in the past, been over-conditioned by the press, the movie, school curricula and other media of propaganda. We too must continue to resist in our various countries the temptation of 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But 'Whites' of goodwill everywhere must help us if we are to realise the world of mutual and unqualified respect, acceptance and integration, at all levels, of all the component colours and hues of society, as visualised by Gandhi of India, Aggrey and Ajayi Crowther of West Africa and Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune, America's 'First Negro Lady,' who died on the 18th May, 1955. In her Last Literary Will and Testament, she left a legacy not only to her own people (America's domestic Colonials) but also to Colonials the world over. Her Will includes a legacy of positive love which could transform the world; confidence and hope which will continue to help us to face the world and maintain our human dignity; respect for the use of power which is increasingly coming into our hands (particularly in Africa and Asia). She died with the hope that 'to-morrow a new Negro unhindered by race taboos and shackles will benefit from more than 330 years of ceaseless striving and struggle. Theirs will be a better world. This I believe with all my heart.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ebony*, August, 1955, p. 105.



# COLOURED WORKERS IN BRITAIN

We give below a selection of extracts from a memorandum sent to the Trades Union Congress by the Ministry of Labour Staff Association.

The members of the M.L.S.A. are mostly employed in the Employment Exchanges throughout the country. Many of them have to deal with coloured workers who come in for advice or in order to register for employment and to find employment, and, at a later stage perhaps to claim unemployment benefit. The concern of the Association does not arise out of colour prejudice but out of the difficulties which are experienced by the members in their attempts to do their work, particularly in the placing of the coloured workers in employment. . .

The total number of coloured workers, and this excludes students, is variously estimated, but appears to be in the region of 60,000 to 80,000. The proportion of the total population is about 1 in 600. . .

The West Indians appear to come to this country because of lack of work at home, poor pay and poor standards of living. The cost of the passage to this country is high, being between £75 and £90 for the route usually taken is to fly to the U.S.A. and then to travel by ship to Britain. The fare appears to be raised by savings, borrowings and the sale of goods and tools. . . The West Indians usually arrive with little or no money. Those who had tools do not have them any longer. They wear light clothing which is not suitable to the British climate. Many have no accommodation to go to and very few have any job promised. Mostly they become a charge upon the State at once. They apply for National Assistance benefit, which is 35s. for a single man plus a rent allowance. . .

## Degrees of Skill

The number of vacancies shown in the August, 1954, *Ministry of Labour Gazette* throughout the country was 356,000, but for men 18 and over, the number was 152,000. A rough examination of the occupations in which these vacancies are to be found would show at once that only about half of them are likely to be open to coloured workers, because the following points have to be taken into account: skill, location, colour prejudice, work which is done by both sexes, the attitude of trades unions and the type of work. It is necessary to exclude, for instance, work in the open in the North of Scotland handling blown timber. . .

It is not possible to give an accurate estimate of the quality of the West Indians, but the following rough estimate might be reasonable. Sixty-five per cent. unskilled, twenty-two per cent. semi-skilled (and this covers quite a range of skill), thirteen per cent. skilled such as fitters, electricians, bricklayers, clerks, etc. . .

When the announcements are made after the landing of boat loads of West Indians that most of them

have been found work, it really means that many of them have been found work of an uncongenial kind and that they will not stay in it; but true enough, for the time being, they have been found work. Often unskilled work is regarded as degrading, and in any case, these people are not looking for heavy labouring work such as humping bricks, either in a brickyard or on a building site, pushing a barrow about or work of that kind. Mostly outdoor work is unsatisfactory because the West Indian is not physically equipped for it in this climate, his physique needs adjustment and his clothing is unsatisfactory.

## Industrial Discipline

It is reported that for some time at any rate the West Indian finds it difficult to adjust himself to industrial discipline as it is understood in this country. He has not got the background to industrial work which a young white man has. For instance, a young white man who takes up work on the railways probably comes from a "railway family." He understands the necessity of discipline and of doing a regular and steady job, and the necessity of being there every morning at the right time. The West Indian appears not to be used to this kind of thing and he expects to be able to have a day off when it suits him. He finds that the pay is lower than he expected, and as his rent tends to be high, this does not give him the ability to satisfy himself during his leisure hours in a way that he desires. All this leads to an attitude of resentment, and as he is looking for another job and finds himself frustrated, the resentment is made the worse.

It is usual for a man to come to the Exchange saying that he knows of vacancies with a particular firm and in a line suitable to him. The Employment Officer may know that such vacancies exist, but he knows that the skill of the individual is quite insufficient for the vacancy, and/or that the firm concerned are not accepting coloured workers. The result may be that the individual goes to the firm himself and is told this quite directly; whereas the Employment Officer has tried to guide the individual into a job which matched his skill and with a firm willing to accept coloured workers. The result is that the individual becomes antagonistic to the Employment Exchange.

As the coloured workers tend to group themselves together, the failure to find suitable jobs from the point of view of the individuals, becomes magnified in discussions amongst the group. It seems to be a fair observation that the West Indians are themselves sensitive to colour prejudice. They see slights where they are not intended. They find them in the attitude of the white people with whom they work and the suggestion that colour prejudice exists is often used



as the excuse for leaving a job which the individual regards as unsatisfactory for other reasons. Most of the small number of women who come seem to find work fairly easily, mainly in hospitals and similar institutions.

There does not seem to be a strong colour prejudice; there is, however, often incredulity on the part of white workers to find that a coloured man has skill, is willing to work and speaks English quite well. Often a good deal is said which to the white worker is a matter of humour, but can be cruel from the point of view of the coloured man. It is probably fair to say that the white worker is not unwilling to have a coloured man working alongside him, but not in charge of him.

### Employers' Attitudes

Many employers have been willing to accept coloured workers, but a fair proportion of them refuse to accept others after the initial experience. One or two bad cases may spoil the chances of others. Naturally employers have a preference for white workers, for local labour and for those who know the job and show a real willingness to work hard. Employers do not seem to like to employ coloured workers in work which is done by both sexes, for they can foresee trouble arising out of the intermingling. Nor do they like the proportion of coloured workers in a particular shop, for instance, to rise too high in relation to the white workers. . . .

Sometimes it is said that extra supervision is needed, especially where coloured workers are employed in gangs. The fact is that the number of firms refusing to take coloured workers in any areas where they settle steadily increases. The following points are made by employers: . . . coloured workers . . . are said to suffer from a good deal of sickness; difficulty appears to arise where West Africans and West Indians are employed together; there are refusals to do the sort of work which white workers readily accept; that the coloured workers change their jobs frequently and therefore are not worth training and therefore have to be employed on unskilled work.

The official attitude of the Ministry is one of no discrimination. The principle in placing people in employment is suitability for the job, but a preference is shown for local residents which is understandable. . . .

No specific evidence is available about the attitude of trades unions to coloured workers, but it appears that often, either by formal or tacit local agreement with employers, coloured workers are rejected. In other cases, employment is refused on the ground that a man has not served an apprenticeship. For instance, a number of coloured workers are skilled in cooping, but it is believed that the appropriate union will not accept them because they have not served an apprenticeship; they are not, therefore, able to obtain skilled employment. This is a situation which would be found presumably in a number of employments.

It would not be reasonable to infer from all that has been said above that the coloured workers are

a poor lot and should not be welcomed to this country. They are a mixed group just as is any group of white workers in industry. There is, however, a fairly high proportion among them of those who are not going to settle down satisfactorily, and are not going to find regular employment. These add to the number of those who hang about the Employment Exchanges and for whom steady jobs cannot really be found. They cause trouble which in some cases leads to fights and prosecution. Sometimes, Employment Officers have been injured. Of the others, many do appear to settle down fairly well but others change their jobs very frequently. On the other hand, many white workers change their jobs frequently, the main reason being, of course, that all are looking for better pay.

There is obviously no single solution to the various problems which arise through the increased immigration of coloured people. It has been suggested that legislation to prevent coloured workers coming to this country, or restricting their entry, should be enacted, but apparently this could cause constitutional difficulties. In any case, that does not seem to be particularly desirable.

### Need for Co-ordination

One suggestion has been that entry should be allowed only to those who have specific jobs to come to. This would be almost impracticable and would severely restrict the entry. . . .

One thing that certainly ought to help would be a greater degree of co-ordination amongst the authorities concerned; these, apart from the representatives of the West Indian Governments, appear to be the Colonial Office, the Home Office, the Ministry of Labour and local authorities where the West Indians congregate.

It would seem to be a reasonable suggestion that the central Government departments should set up an inter-departmental committee to investigate the problems and to hear evidence on them. This should lead to the establishment of a branch of one department which would co-ordinate the action of the various departments, and would give a lead with advice and help, to the local authorities.

As regards employment, the following suggestions appear to be worth consideration. One of the main troubles of the Employment Officer at the Exchange is that he has to deal with individuals who find that reality falls far short of expectation. This could be overcome to some extent if wide publicity was given in the West Indies to the sort of jobs available and for which West Indians are suitable, the true rates of pay and the problems of accommodation.

It may be that the General Council will not feel able to conduct a full investigation into the matter which, admittedly, would be a fairly considerable undertaking. The Association therefore suggests that the Government should be pressed to undertake the sort of investigation mentioned above, and the T.U.C. should consider giving evidence to the investigating body.

—*Civil Service Argus*, February, 1955.



## COLOURED IMMIGRANTS AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

THE Empire distant and docile lends itself to empty, idealistic professions of goodwill. A swelling tide of immigration from the fastnesses of Africa or the multitudes of the West Indies is quite another thing. 'Kaffirs'—as the ugly phrase goes—no more begin at Calais but in North Kensington. Overnight, colonial affairs have become a matter of daily domestic politics. Colonisation has meant migration, not only of Europeans to new lands, but of Negroes to the New World, of Indians and Levantines to Africa or South-east Asia, of Chinese and Japanese—wherever they could find a welcome. Now the movement has reached Europe. The rate of immigration is still small—15,000 a year come to Britain. But the tide is rising and the number of ex-colonials who have become permanent residents in England is estimated at close on 100,000; still a modest figure if we compare it to the flow of Puerto Ricans into New York. Of the 2½ million in Puerto Rico, 350,000 move every year, and 60,000 stay for good in continental America, increasing annually by 10 per cent. the present stock of over half a million Puerto Ricans in New York. In times of depression the flow may grow, so that governments will have to provide employment not only for the native-born workers but also for massive immigration from the hard-hit colonies and Commonwealth countries.

### Scope for Constructive Action

We must understand the second industrial revolution now stirring in the torrid zones and developing countries long dormant. It takes little imagination to put ourselves in the sandals of the colonial worker—no longer circumscribed by his tribe or on his own rice or maize field—seeking employment not with some indigenous industrial firm, but gravitating towards the best labour market where the highest wages are paid, i.e. towards the old-established industrial countries, which are further characterised by extensive social security arrangements and by measures, he hopes, which will ensure full employment. Easy communications help. The Puerto Ricans fly to New York—101 planes leave San Juan each week, each packed with more than 60 workers and peasants. The ships which ply the Atlantic towards Southampton or Liverpool or London are full of enterprising pioneers returning to a new industrial frontier.

Creatively used, the coloured workers may yet have important repercussions on British labour. It should be remembered that Irish immigrants at the end of the last century did much to fashion the modern British Labour Movement. As trade unionists, the dock workers created the new unionism after the great dock strike of 1889, and politically they assisted Keir Hardie to win his epochal election. In Australia, the Irish and British immigrants installed the first Labour governments of the world.

Where other European nations wax vaguely

enthusiastic about helping through technical assistance or hero-worship an over-life-sized Nehru or Schweitzer, the ordinary men of Britain can do something on their own door step. Sensitive to anything that may be discrimination, the colonial is apt to magnify or misinterpret any slight he suffers; home sick, he may frequently indulge in self pity, but many of his trials are real enough and they should be followed up.

Asked about their views, a group of labour exchange officials recently wrote: 'When a coloured worker comes back for his second job we must almost inevitably offer him another unskilled job, and the worker often thinks he is being cheated because he is coloured. The Ministry of Labour absolutely prohibits any discrimination (e.g. a prospective employer should not be told that the man being sent to him is coloured), but in practice the placing officer knows that some employers will not take them. A fair number of employers are willing. There is practically no refusal in principle to employ them on grounds of colour, except in some cases where men and women are working together, and reluctance is evident to employ too high a proportion of them. But the list of unwilling employers grows; many who were willing alter their view within a short time. Employers say they 'need extra supervision, especially if working together in a gang with no English worker in it'; 'show lack of understanding of regulations concerning machinery'; 'do not stay on the job for a normal span'; 'on outdoor work have a high sickness rate.' One example given was a worker who had to lift 40 lb. crates (a very small weight in British industry, e.g. a postman's load is 37 lbs.) and left after two hours. This employer was employing his first coloured worker and will take no more. It is not so difficult to place women, in industry, as clerks, in hospitals. Specific examples from different areas indicate that in London no small firms will take them. Two large firms are now unwilling, the reasons given including 'not working hard enough'; 'too much sickness'; 'trouble between West Indians and West African workers on same job.' In the Midlands, a flax mill and brickyards took workers from London, nearly all returned to London as the work was too heavy.

The Labour movement must now consider whether it should agitate for a 'fair labour code' which would automatically exclude from public tender any firm unwilling to hire workers irrespective of their colour. It must in equity apply the same discipline to the unions which victimise colonial subjects. A dispersal policy may aid those areas which have housing trouble and feel that they are being overrun by new colonial arrivals. Bridgeheads of particularly reliable and competent coloured families may be established in new parts of the country. Through the branches of labour's organisations the right contacts could be made with the public agencies, private clubs, the churches and the new neighbours. Orientation classes



too may be of value. The function of the tutors is not only to teach, telling the immigrant about his rights and the ways to use the existing services; the real purpose of the classes is to overcome the feelings of inadequacy which so often lead the colonial to self-exclusion from activities in sports and cultural circles which would be only too ready to welcome him. The *amour propre* of the immigrant can be assuaged if advice (about cleanliness and consideration) is couched in psychologically informed language—such as is common among ordinary people in this country in their dealings with one another. The well-known sense of tact and mutual respect is not always applied to 'foreigners.' We must learn that the very category of 'foreignness' as it was thought of before the war (always indicative of a mean sentiment) now has ceased to have much meaning. War has come so much nearer, as have the Commonwealth citizens. Thus it is not fanciful to say that Donne's famous words, that man is never an island unto himself, apply with new force to our entire island, now part of the main and experiencing, as others do, the world-wide regrouping of man-power and social energies which marks these times.

Unless we wish further to curtail the right to travel, the fifth freedom which is so much in danger in these days of cold war, and thus immeasurably weaken the bond of Commonwealth nationality and, within it, the leadership of Britain, the new challenges should be carefully studied. A policy statement by the Party would be welcome. If made, it should underline the British experience as in no way extraordinary; it is typical of a new stage of human development. The mixing of white and non-white peoples which began in the colonial era and is going on now, only in both directions and under new and heightened pressure and novel names will continue for a long time. The immigrants from the backward areas landing weekly on the shores of Britain or arriving in Paris, New York or Amsterdam, and the large urban conglomerations of the East, are testimony that the term 'development of the under-developed areas' is a larger movement in which the developed countries are being remade too by the so-called under-developed peoples.

Leo Silberman.

## Race Relations Report

The United Nations Committee on Information from non-self-governing territories, which has had its life extended for a further three-year term, has this session been examining the question of race relations<sup>1</sup> on the principles laid down by Resolution 644 (VII) of the General Assembly, 1952. In its admirable urge to reach that racial harmony 'essential to human advancement,' the Committee has concentrated on the abolition of racial distinction in social policy and public administration. Two factors, however, emerge to-day which were perhaps not fully considered in the

General Assembly when it passed the resolution which appears to be based on the simple thesis that white exploits black.

One is the relationships between non-white races in both Africa and Asia. How far, for instance, would Moslem peoples in some areas welcome the abolition of special legislation which protects their religious and legal rights? Should not the Fijians, now a minority in their own land, have some discriminatory rights both in land and law against the growing Indian majority? Sections (b) and (d) of the Resolution should lay greater emphasis on these problems. Secondly, there is the question of those who, in French terminology, are called 'évolués.' The Committee agrees with the views of UNESCO experts that differences between human beings within a single race may be as great as those between races. But differences, whether cultural or social, do exist. No one would wish to perpetuate those discriminatory laws of which many Europeans are rightly ashamed. But where differences not necessarily of superiority, do exist, their abolition by law would be futile until the aim in view is clearly defined and accepted.

This necessarily leads to another question which is being considered by the Committee: the effects of education on the integration of communities. The Committee applauds the French policy of educational integration in its African territories, not perhaps considering that French education means French civilisation. The British have never laid so much stress on teaching African children about 'our ancestors the Gauls.' Professor Margaret Read points out in her book 'Education and Social Change in Tropical Areas' that, on the contrary, after a certain stage during which the pattern of the dominant culture is accepted, there is, with the growth of national self-consciousness, a kind of 'cultural Swaraj' when increasing emphasis is placed on traditional history and ways of life. The Committee's opinion is that there should be no educational difference on a racial basis, and only at the primary stage is there any justification for separation, if at all. It would perhaps be more realistic to suggest that until African colleges come of age, African education must have a sufficiently European slant to allow adequate entry to universities; but total integration is never likely to satisfy a variety of races, unless one is aiming deliberately at a single cultural pattern, as is done by France and in the United States.

Perhaps the most hopeful sign of this session's work is the interest taken by the Committee in the U.N. Conference on the Eradication of Prejudice and Discrimination, which condemns such practices 'in whatever form and in whatever country.' It would be a relief if instead of trying to extend the Committee's right of political interference (A/AC. 35/SR. 97) or indulging colonial claims, such as Guatemala's over British Honduras (A/AC.35/SR.108) and Indonesia's threat of unilateral action in Dutch New Guinea, members could concentrate on the real work of the Committee, which is a disinterested consideration of the real needs and desires of colonial peoples everywhere.

Molly Mortimer.

<sup>1</sup> UNO reference A/AC. 35/L.210.



# Parliament

**Purchase of Jamaican Bananas.** Mr. James Johnson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he would undertake the bulk purchase of bananas from Jamaica. Mr. Amory replied that State trading in bananas had been given up on March 31st, 1953, and he had no intention of putting the clock back. Mr. Johnson then asked if the Minister would agree that unless Jamaica had economic stability, it was likely that political and even social instability would follow. Mr. Amory replied that it was a question of the method suggested and State trading by them was not one which he felt would be conducive to economic stability. (July 7.)

**District Commissioner, Lamu, Kenya.** Mr. Alport asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies how many changes in the appointment of the District Commissioner, Lamu, Kenya Colony, took place between January, 1950, and May, 1955; and the average period of the tenure of this office by successive district commissioners. Mr. Hopkinson replied that there had been five changes; the average period of tenure had been eleven months. Mr. Alport asked if he had any plans for ensuring that the tenure of office of administrative officers in circumstances such as these should be longer than had been the average in many parts of the Colonial Empire during the last few years. Mr. Hopkinson said he quite agreed, but there were special circumstances in this case. Two of the officers were moved on health grounds and another asked to retire. Both the Governor of Kenya and his right hon. Friend were very conscious of the need to maintain continuity in the appointment of district commissioners and district officers. It was the aim of the Governor to keep a district commissioner in a district for a period of five years, but he was sure the House would realise that there were particular difficulties in Kenya connected with the emergency which made it difficult to carry out what they hoped would become normal practice. (July 13.)

**Research Expenditure in Colonial Territories.** Mr. Albu asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies why the amount spent on research out of monies voted for Colonial Development and Welfare had been reduced last year. Mr. Hopkinson replied that the amount issued in 1954-55 was £1,173,381 compared with an average annual issue of £1,263,888 over the three previous years. This did not reflect a fall in the amount of research carried out in, or on behalf of, Colonial Territories. The difference in the amount issued was due in the main to a fall in the amount of capital expenditure required now that buildings for the larger new research organisations had been completed. Another factor was that some colonial Governments were now finding it possible to assume a greater proportion of the cost of their research work. Mr. J. Griffiths asked if he did not think that the time had come for consultation with representatives of the universities in the colonial territories and

others responsible for sending students over here to urge the necessity for greater concentration upon the kind of education which would fill these (i.e. technical) vacancies in the Colonial Territories. Mr. Hopkinson replied that his right hon. Friend would certainly be glad to consider that suggestion. (July 13.)

**Tobacco Industry in Northern Rhodesia.** In reply to Mr. R. Edwards, Mr. Hopkinson said that the employment of young persons between the ages of 12 and 16 only, was permitted on light work in tobacco grading establishments and sales floors because certain tasks at certain periods provided a useful and congenial occupation and training, usually under parental supervision, for young persons who would otherwise be idle. (July 13.)

**East Africa Industrial Council.** In reply to Mrs. White, Mr. Hopkinson said that no Africans in Tanganyika were members of the East Africa Industrial Council. Nevertheless, the Tanganyika Government, in making their nominations to the Industrial Council, always sought to draw on local industrial experience without regard to race. Mrs. White said that while it might be possible that not many Africans in Tanganyika were in a position to contribute much to this Council, was the Minister aware that there were some who, she believed, could learn a good deal if they were made members of the Council and who would be of value in the future? Would they be considered in making further nominations to the Council? Mr. Hopkinson said that the object was to decide who were the best persons to represent each territory on this Council. Certainly the appointment of Africans, if it proved to be suitable, would not be excluded. (July 20.)

**Elections in Trinidad.** Mr. D. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether the elections were to be held in Trinidad in 1955, as provided for by the 1950 Constitution. Mr. Hopkinson replied that his right hon. Friend hoped shortly to authorise the Governor of Trinidad to make an announcement about this matter. Mr. Jones asked if he would therefore assure them that there was no truth in the suggestion which had been circulated in this colony that in fact elections were to be suspended. Mr. Hopkinson said that he would prefer not to say anything more on this matter at present, but there had been discussions in the Legislative Council on this question as a result of which a resolution calling for an extension of the life of the present Legislative Council had been passed, so that the matter certainly had been discussed. As they hoped to be able to make an announcement very soon, he preferred not to say any more then. Mr. Jones asked if the Minister was aware that that was precisely the danger, that because the existing Legislative Council wanted to continue the life of the Administration in the colony, there was a danger that the elections would be held up. (July 27.)



# Guide to Books

## The Colour Problem

By Anthony H. Richmond. (Penguin Books, 3s. 6d.)

The colour problem is one which increasingly concerns us. Here in Britain we are reminded of our responsibilities towards the coloured peoples as West Indians pour into our cities in search of better living conditions. We cannot accuse other nations of colour discrimination, still less show disapproval of the colour bar in the Colonies, while we remain indifferent to the plight of these immigrants. To those who wish to discover why the colour of a man's skin should determine his status as a human being, and what might be done to lessen the gap between the so-called coloured and white peoples, this factual book should be welcome as an aid to thoughtful study. The facts are presented clearly and interestingly, with careful notes and references.

The diversity of the problem is staggering, but Mr. Richmond wisely confines his survey to racial relations in South Africa, British Colonial Africa, the British West Indies, and in Britain—a large enough area, even so, to be discussed in 330 pages!

In his introductory chapter he considers the meaning of race, the colour bar, and differentiates between discrimination, prejudice and segregation. A chapter is devoted to the political background, and in other sections of the book he puts forward the need for greater economic investment and the improvement of labour conditions, trade union organisation and social integration in Africa and the West Indies.

More space is given to racial relations in Britain and to the growth of apartheid in South Africa (with its grave influence on other African countries). As the author says: 'We, in Britain, have no right to condemn what is happening in South Africa in a spirit of self-righteousness; but, by doing everything in our power to improve racial relationships in those areas where we have direct responsibility, we can set an example to South Africa and to the world. We must extend fundamental human rights to all, irrespective of colour, class, or creed, remembering the definition of human rights put forward by Mahatma Gandhi in a letter to the Director-General of UNESCO written May 25th, 1947' (quoted on page 319).

In his description of what is happening in Kenya to-day, we are reminded of the 'close analogy between the movement (Mau Mau) and the abominable persecutions and barbarities of the Nazis, as in Belsen. There can be little doubt that Mau Mau is the symptom of a sick society and a terrible warning to the world of what could happen elsewhere in Africa if human relationships are allowed to deteriorate further.'

If we are to learn from our past mistakes—and the lesson is forced upon us—do we not radically have to change our attitude to the coloured peoples of the world and respond to their claim for equality of opportunity as fellow human beings? We are just

beginning to appreciate the emotional conflict which colour prejudice creates and fosters as we read the deeply moving and eloquent writings of the coloured people themselves, writings which are taking a high place in our literature to-day. In Mr. Richmond's concluding words, 'Let us hope that the gentle spirit of Gandhi will work in the hearts of men and women, of every race and religion, in the tremendous tasks of conciliation that lie ahead.'

*Grace Turner*

## The Rhodesian: The Life of Sir Roy Welensky.

By Don Taylor. (Museum Press, 18s.)

This is a popular, not a scholarly, life and its judgments of men and of politics are often superficial. It succeeds, however, in creating a lively impression of Sir Roy Welensky's personality and of Rhodesia and its development, for the turbulent life of Sir Roy was influenced at every point by the growth of the young country.

His early formative experiences included a rough boyhood in the poor quarters of Salisbury, some years as a storeman in the remote mining and farming areas of N. Rhodesia, and amateur boxing. Work on the railways led him into trade unionism and the championship of the white workers, which in turn brought him into the Legislative Council.

Mr. Taylor suggests that Fabian criticism in the 'forties of Welensky's efforts to strengthen the white workers and to secure amalgamation of the two Rhodesias, took too little account of what he did for the advance of the Africans. He quotes Sir Stewart Gore-Brown, 'We worked together for the advancement of Africans on numberless occasions. He (Welensky) gave me his backing over trades unions, he helped me in land and housing and many other problems. Ironically enough, I was criticised severely by Fabian circles in Britain for having anything to do with a man like Welensky, but nothing one could say would induce them to believe that the African cause in reality owed an immense amount to him.'

Yet Mr. Taylor tells us nothing of that period to invalidate the opinion that Welensky's conception was the development of the Africans only in so far as it did not conflict with white supremacy. The question that is still to be resolved is how far Welensky, as Deputy Prime Minister of the Central African Federation and a man likely to influence Africa greatly in the future, has moved from that position. Mr. Taylor states fairly in his last pages that much depends on Welensky's being able to shake off the limitations of his earlier loyalties in meeting the problems of racial co-operation, and it is noteworthy that in a speech made since the publication of this book, Sir Roy did speak in unusually forthright terms of the folly of doctrines of racial restriction.

*Mary Winchester*



## The African Awakening

By Basil Davidson. (Jonathan Cape, 12s. 6d.)

Mr. Davidson, in this book, has given us with well-judged compression a history of the Congo Basin. From the time of the arrival of the Portuguese his account is vivid and admirably indexed and documented. Without over-emphasis he unfolds the unimaginable horror of the slave trade and the more calculated cruelties of the Leopoldian system. Finally, he develops his theme of the African awakening, which he sees as the drift, turning in recent times to a flood, of the rural African to the new industrial areas, and his evolution there from a tribal peasant to a modern technical man. As the author says on page 102, he sees all African problems in a framework of European mining and other enterprises kept going by migrant African workers; with sterile African Reserves as the labour reservoir. This thesis is invalid over much the greater part of Colonial Africa, and this is the inherent weakness of the book.

It cannot be said too often that the problems we have first to solve are those of African peasant agriculture, its onerous, primitive, and soil-destructive nature, and its low productivity. The crime of all Colonial administrations, and not least those of British West Africa, has been their attitude, until very recent times, of inertia and laissez-faire in face of these problems. Yet Mr. Davidson casts only a passing glance at the grave disruption of agriculture which the slave trade and the use of forced labour brought about. He tells us nothing of African farming developments in the modern Congo, without which the foundations of industrial progress are insecure.

The author devotes the last portion of the book to revelations regarding the scandal of contract labour in Portuguese Angola to-day. This excellent piece of detection has only a tenuous connection with the main theme of the book and would have been better dealt with separately. Almost all the correspondence resulting from this publication has been on the latter subject to the neglect of the work as a whole.

T. F. Betts.

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## Migrant Labour in the Gold Coast

Report by R. B. Davison. (University College of the Gold Coast, 3s. 6d.)

This was a pilot survey carried out in 1954 at the request of the Gold Coast Government. About half-a-million people cross the Volta ferries annually, many of them from French territories. This factual study should be most valuable for everyone who has to deal with the social and economic problems involved. It is to be followed by further surveys in greater detail.

## Correspondence

### Uganda Agreement

Sir,—In your comment on the Uganda negotiations on page 4 in the August number of *Venture*, you refer to African opposition to the appointment of an Asian Minister in Uganda and then make what is in effect a policy statement: 'While one must aim at common citizenship and thence a common roll, until that is accomplished it is not unreasonable to give representation to a major community. . . If the aim is clearly stated, tolerance should be shown during this interim period of communal representation' (my italics).

While I totally disagree with communal representation even for 'major' communities (as, for example, the shocking experience that we have had in misdirecting the constitutional growth of Northern Rhodesia), I will not elaborate on that point here, but merely point out that the Government of Uganda did not at any time suggest that the Asian community was to be given communal representation. The White Paper makes it clear that appointments are to be made in the Governor's discretion and that Ministers are not to be appointed as representatives of any race. The Governor has since stated in a broadcast reported in *East Africa and Rhodesia*, 4.8.55, 'I think you may have feared that we are going to set a precedent of communal representation in the Ministry by laying down the allocation of posts in the constitution as between different races. This is not going to be done.' Sir Andrew Cohen then went on to say: 'May I urge you to drop the term "multi-racial" Government? I have never used it for Uganda and never intend to do so. The word does not give a correct picture of what our Government is going to be.'

FABIAN.

London, W.9.

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